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UNIVERSE

3

RATED T+ TEEN PLUS
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6-ISSUE
MINI-
SERIES

THE BATMAN™ WHO LAUGHS™



SNYDER
JOCK
BARON



"Somebody has to do it, don't you see? Somebody has to save the world..."

CAPTAIN METROPOLIS



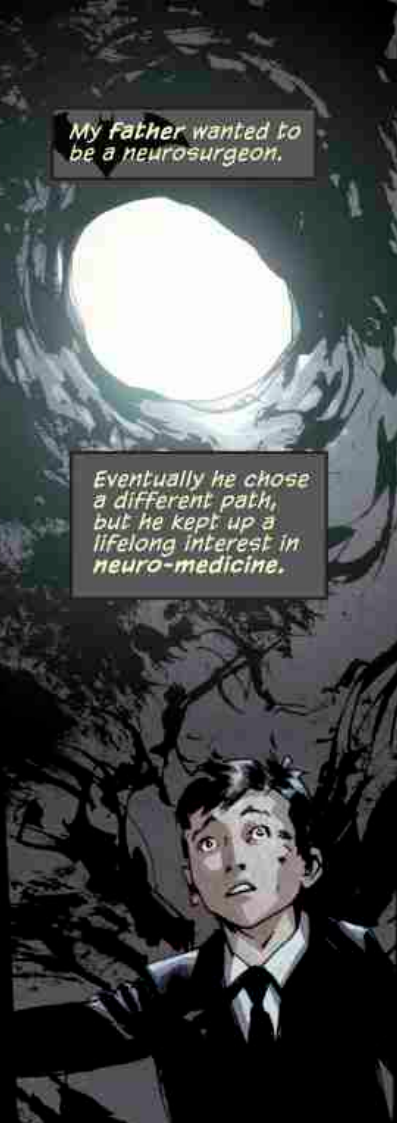
A TWELVE-ISSUE DELUXE SERIES

**GEOFF JOHNS • GARY FRANK
BRAD ANDERSON**



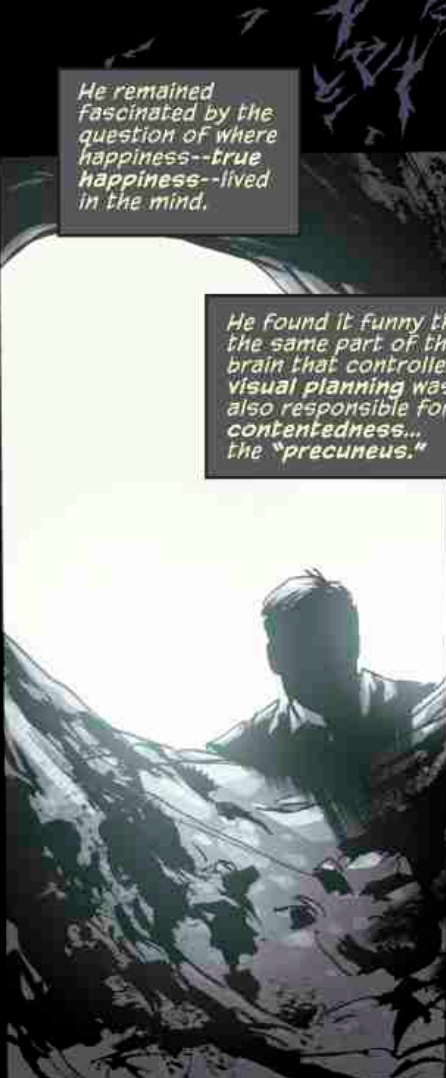
THE BATMAN WHO LAUGHS 3 SNYDER • JOCK • BARON

DAVEY • TERRY • PLUS
FROM THE
BATMAN



My father wanted to be a neurosurgeon.

Eventually he chose a different path, but he kept up a lifelong interest in neuro-medicine.



He remained fascinated by the question of where happiness--true happiness--lived in the mind.

He found it funny that the same part of the brain that controlled visual planning was also responsible for contentedness... the "precuneus."

It was his belief that planning, envisioning good things coming played a big part in making those things real.

I can still remember the day I fell in... calling out to him from the dark.



"See it in your head, Bruce," he called back. "See the rope, see yourself climbing out, see yourself being brave."

And I did.

Sometimes I think that Batman was born at that moment, even more than in the alley or at the window.

Now, I have become a man of plans, almost only plans. Every new one an extension of the first.



I make them real...one, then the next. So often I've forgotten what it's like to reach for one and grasp nothing... or worse...

...reach and find something else there entirely.



JAMES,
WE NEED
TO TALK.

I'VE
BEEN DOING
EVERYTHING
ASKED OF ME.
I PROMISE.



CAN YOU...
CAN YOU JUST
STOP STOCKING
FOR A MOMENT,
PLEASE?

I
ACTUALLY
CANT.



I'M SORRY, DAD,
IT'S ALL TIMED AND
MONITORED.

I DO THE
FINGER PRICK TWICE
A DAY, KEEP TO
THE PROGRAM.



THERE'S A
TEN-FOOT ERROR
OF MARGIN ON THE
ANKLET, BUT I'D NEVER
RISK IT. HOME, HERE,
HOME AGAIN. NO
STOPS.

SOMETIMES
THE MEAL DELIVERY
SERVICE LEAVES THE
FOOD AT THE BACK
ENTRANCE TO THE
BUILDING. IT'S IN
RANGE, BUT I
DON'T--



YOU DON'T EAT
THOSE NIGHTS. I KNOW,
JAMES. JUST BECAUSE I
VOTED **AGAINST** ALL THIS
DOESN'T MEAN I'M NOT
WATCHING YOU.

NEVER
THINK I'M NOT
WATCHING
YOU.

I'M GLAD
TO KNOW YOU
ARE, DAD. I KNOW
YOU DON'T BELIEVE
IN THIS YET,
BUT--

DAMMIT,
STOP DOING
THAT...



...JUST...
STOP AND
TALK TO
ME.

I CALLED YOUR
SUPERVISORS. WE
HAVE SOME TIME
OFF THE GRID HERE.
I NEED YOU TO
LISTEN TO ME.



I SAW THE
SCANS. I KNOW
WHAT'S HAPPENED
TO YOU. THE...
PARTS THAT'VE
WOKEN UP. AND AS
MUCH AS I WAS
AGAINST THIS,
I'M...I'M GLAD
YOU'RE DOING
WELL.

I DON'T KNOW
HOW "WELL" I'M
DOING, BUT THANK YOU.
TO BE HONEST, THE PARTS
THAT ARE ALERT NOW...
THEY'RE SORT OF...
AWFUL. I'VE NEVER
FELT THIS WAY.
THIS...SHAME...
GUILT...



...REMORSE.

SO YOU DON'T
HAVE TO FEEL
BAD ABOUT IT. I'M
READY TO GO BACK,
DAD. TAKE ME BACK.
I DON'T KNOW IF
I EVEN--



JAMES,
I'M NOT
HERE TO SHUT
DOWN YOUR
PROGRAM.



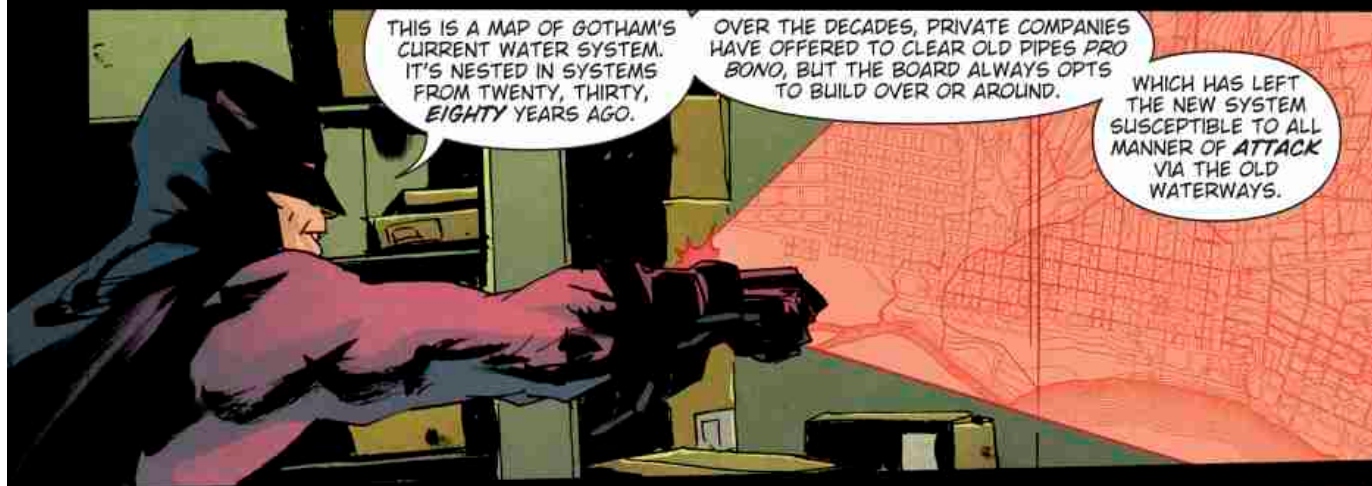
I DON'T
UNDERSTAND. IF
THIS ISN'T ABOUT
THAT, WHAT'S IT
ABOUT?

IT'S ABOUT
PLANS...



...PLANS TO
KILL THIS CITY
A HUNDRED
DIFFERENT
WAYS.

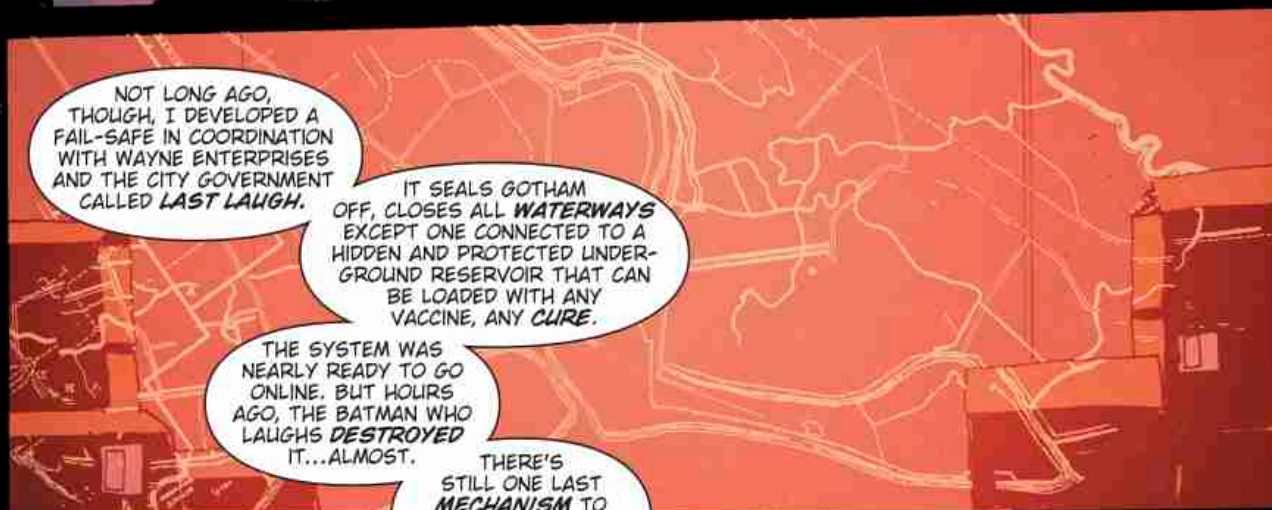




THIS IS A MAP OF GOTHAM'S CURRENT WATER SYSTEM. IT'S NESTED IN SYSTEMS FROM TWENTY, THIRTY, EIGHTY YEARS AGO.

OVER THE DECADES, PRIVATE COMPANIES HAVE OFFERED TO CLEAR OLD PIPES *PRO BONO*, BUT THE BOARD ALWAYS OPTS TO BUILD OVER OR AROUND.

WHICH HAS LEFT THE NEW SYSTEM SUSCEPTIBLE TO ALL MANNER OF **ATTACK** VIA THE OLD WATERWAYS.



NOT LONG AGO, THOUGH, I DEVELOPED A FAIL-SAFE IN COORDINATION WITH WAYNE ENTERPRISES AND THE CITY GOVERNMENT CALLED **LAST LAUGH**.

IT SEALS GOTHAM OFF, CLOSES ALL **WATERWAYS** EXCEPT ONE CONNECTED TO A HIDDEN AND PROTECTED UNDERGROUND RESERVOIR THAT CAN BE LOADED WITH ANY VACCINE, ANY **CURE**.

THE SYSTEM WAS NEARLY READY TO GO ONLINE. BUT HOURS AGO, THE BATMAN WHO LAUGHS **DESTROYED** IT...ALMOST.

THERE'S STILL ONE **LAST MECHANISM** TO ACTIVATE THE SYSTEM, AND I HAVE TO PROTECT IT.

BUT RIGHT NOW, I NEED TO KNOW WHICH ROUTE THE BATMAN WHO LAUGHS IS GOING TO USE TO INFECT GOTHAM, JAMES.

I'M TELLING YOU...I DON'T KNOW.

LOOK!

HOW WOULD I EVEN--



HOW WOULD YOU KNOW?! BECAUSE IT USED BE **ALL** YOU KNEW! HELL, AS A CHILD, ALL YOU DID WAS **THINK** ABOUT IT!

AT THIRTEEN YEARS OLD YOU WERE A **LEGEND!** YOU HAD BOOKS, JOURNALS **FILLED** WITH ROUTES, GENIUS COMBINATIONS!



"IN FACT, YOU WERE SO GOOD AT IT, CRIMINALS TOOK NOTICE. EVEN JOKER TOOK NOTICE, CITED YOU AS THE BEST."



ALL THOSE OLD JOURNALS WERE SUBMITTED TO GCPD HOLDING YEARS AGO, THEY'RE UNDER LOCK AND--

I KNOW. I CHECKED. THEY'RE GONE. THE BATMAN WHO LAUGHS LIKELY HAS THEM ALREADY.

IF NOT, HE'S COMING FOR YOU. SO YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO REMEMBER.

I WANT TO HELP YOU...

THEN SEE THE PLAN.



I'VE SEEN THE DATA, BATMAN. CORRECTION'S, LESLIE'S, WAYNE'S. JAMES *ISN'T* LYING ABOUT THE CHANGES IN HIM. I'M NOT SAYING HE'S--

SAYING HE'S WHAT? CURED? GOOD.

BECAUSE IF YOU BELIEVED THAT YOU WOULDN'T BE HERE.



THE BATMAN WHO LAUGHS IS WINNING. HE'S USING WHATEVER DARK METAL IS LEFT IN THIS CITY TO BRING *BRUCE WAYNES* THROUGH FROM OTHER WORLDS, MAKING A SERUM THAT'LL TURN THIS CITY INTO HELL.

I HAVE NO WAY OF SEEING HIS PLAN OR PREDICTING THE TOUCH POINTS. NOW HE'S ALMOST DESTROYED MY ONLY FAIL-SAFE.

SO STOP TIP TOEING AROUND IT. YOU'RE HERE FOR THE SAME DAMN REASON I AM. BECAUSE SOME PART OF YOU BELIEVES, DESPITE WHATEVER *CHANGES* HE'S GOING THROUGH, THAT HE'S *STILL* THE BOY WHO'S BETTER THAN ANYONE AT MURDERING THIS CITY.



IS THAT WHY YOU'RE HERE, DAD?

I DON'T THINK THAT YOU'RE...LOOK, JAMES, CAN YOU HELP BATMAN? CAN YOU HELP US BOTH?



JAMES...

WILL YOU TURN THE STOCK GUN OFF AND TALK TO US?



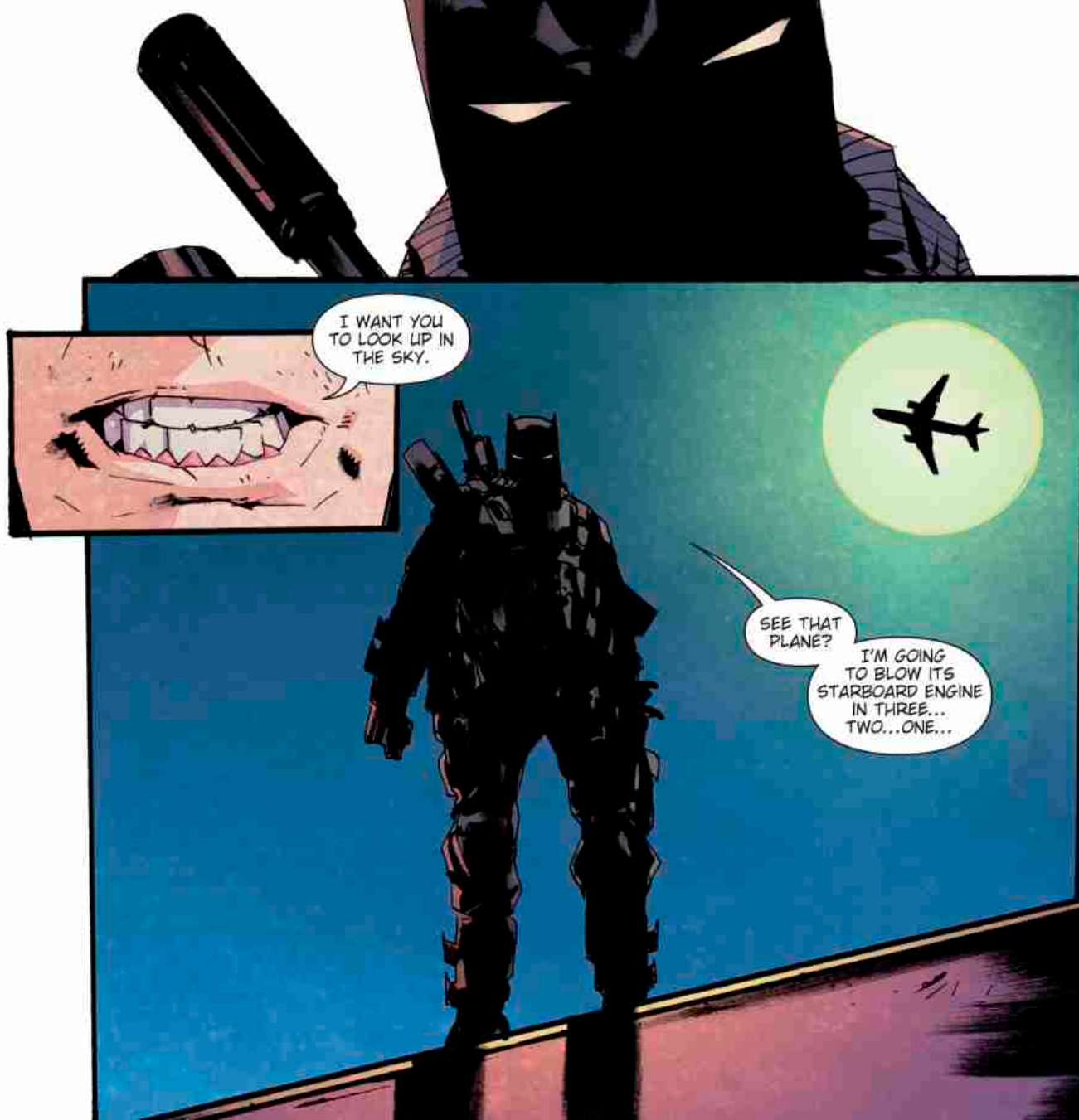
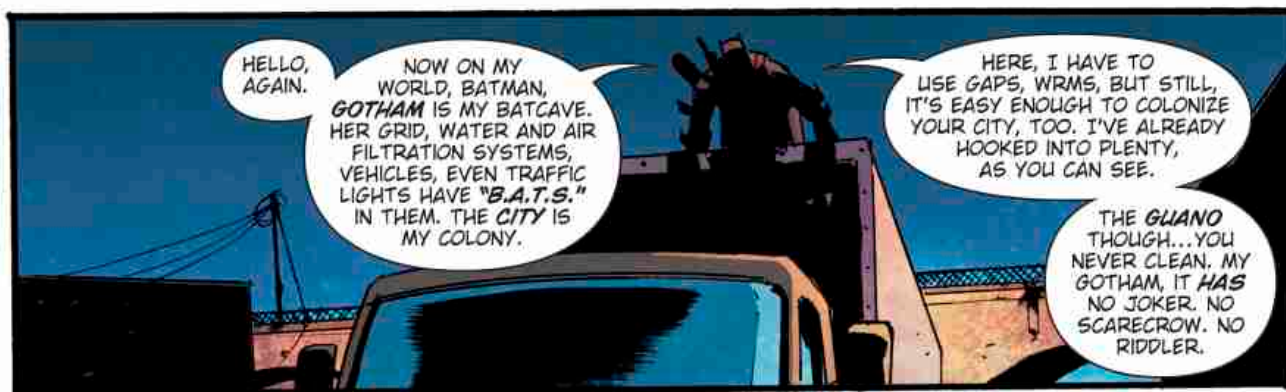
I'M... I'M NOT DOING THAT.













BANG

YOU WILL *GIVE*
ME GORDON OR THAT
PLANE--NATIONAL FLIGHT
378 WITH 72 PASSENGERS
ABOARD, 41 OF THEM
GOTHAMITES--WILL
CRASH INTO
MIDTOWN...

...AND
EVERYONE ON
IT WILL *DIE*.



...

JIM.

NO.

BATMAN,
WE'RE NOT
GIVING JAMES
TO THAT
THING.



JAMES
ISN'T THE
GORDON HE'S
AFTER.



WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU--?



FOLLOW ME IF YOU WANT. BUT MAKE SURE YOU COLLECT YOUR PARTICIPATION TROPHIES. THERE'LL BE AT LEAST 72 SCATTERED AROUND MIDTOWN.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND. WHAT JUST--

LAST LAUGH. UNTIL IT WAS FINISHED AND HANDED OVER TO THE CITY, I RIGGED THE TRIGGER SO IT'D NEED MORE THAN JUST ME TO INITIATE IT.



IT WOULD NEED MY AUTHORIZATION AND THE AUTHORIZATION OF SOMEONE I TRUSTED AS MUCH AS MYSELF WITH THE INTERESTS OF THIS CITY.

YOUR FATHER.

YOU'RE SAYING...

I'M SAYING...

"...WE JUST
LOST
AGAIN."

CRAPS.

ICEBERG LOUNGE.

SIR?

THERE'S
SOMETHING WRONG
WITH THIS DAMNED DIE.
THE ICE IS SUPPOSED TO
BE DENSER AT THE SIX,
GIVING THE ONE A TEN
PERCENT HIKE.

THIS DIE,
THOUGH, A HUNDRED
ROLLS IN, AND IT'S
NEARLY #5% EVEN.

SO HE'S A
JUNKIE. SEND
SECURITY, YOU
IDIOT.

SIR, THERE'S A...
MAN AT THE DOOR. HE'S NOT
LEAVING. EVERY TIME WE ASK
HIM WHAT HE WANTS OR WHO
HE IS, ANYTHING, ALL HE SAYS
IS, "I'M BATMAN," IN
WHISPERY VOICES
AND LAUGHS.

WE DID.
WE SENT
EVERYONE OUT
THERE. NO ONE'S
RESPONDING.

AND THERE'S
BLOOD IN THE
ALLEY, SIR. A LOT
OF BLOOD. AND
MAYBE... OTHER
PARTS. IT'S
HARD TO--

WHAT?
PAXER, PENN,
COME IN!

SEE,
I--

ENOUGH! GET
ME MY ARSENAL.
WHATEVER YOU DO,
DON'T OPEN THE
DOOR. WHOEVER
THIS GUY IS--

I TOLD YOU
ALREADY...





AND THE DEFENSES IN THIS PLACE ARE IMPRESSIVE...

...THE BLAST-PROOF CRAPPY TABLES, THE BULLETPROOF GLASS HIDDEN IN THE ICE OF THE CAGE.

AND THE DEFIBRILLATORS THAT ARE CHARGED EXTRA STRONG, TO ELECTROCUTE ENEMIES, MAKE IT LOOK LIKE A HEART ATTACK.



WAIT...DON'T! I'LL GIVE YOU WHATEVER YOU WAN--

CLEAR.



IT'S AMAZING, REALLY. WHAT YOU'VE BUILT HERE. YOU HAD A VISION AND MADE IT REAL. EVERY BATMAN IN EXISTENCE RESPECTS YOU FOR IT, OSWALD.

IN FACT, I'LL TELL YOU A SECRET...PEOPLE ASSUME THAT BATMAN'S LAST ENEMY ON MOST WORLDS OUT THERE IS JOKER. MAYBE RIDDLER. OR RA'S...



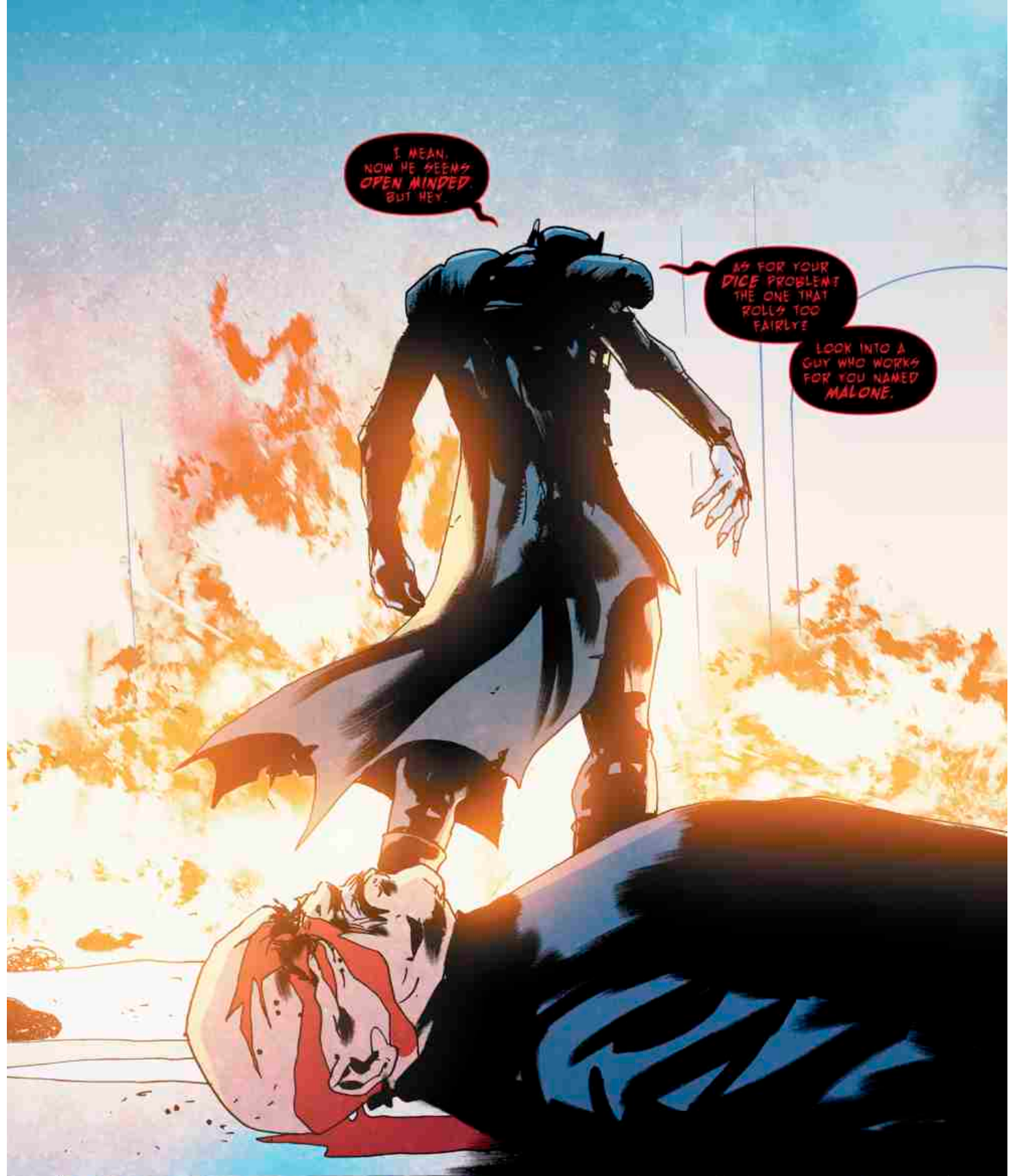
...BUT IT'S YOU. SEE, YOU GROW THIS CRIME EMPIRE UNTIL HE HAS TO DEAL WITH YOU. ON SOME WORLDS YOU WIN, GET FOLKS TO TURN ON HIM. ON A COUPLE, HE WINS.



MY FAVORITE WORLD IS ONE WHERE HE ACTUALLY ENDS UP COMPETING WITH YOU TO BRING YOU DOWN.

WHERE HE BECOMES THE OVERSEER OF A LEGAL MECCA OF GAMBLING AND DRUGS BUILD ON THIS SPOT HERE...MOSTLY THROUGH THE HELP OF HIS FRIEND...





I MEAN,
NOW HE SEEMS
OPEN MINDED.
BUT HEY.

OH FOR YOUR
DICE PROBLEM
THE ONE THAT
ROLLS TOO
FAIRLY

LOOK INTO A
GUY WHO WORKS
FOR YOU NAMED
MALONE.



MMMMM...

MATCHES
MALONE...

"THERE ARE ALL
SORTS OF WAYS
TO CORRUPT
THE SYSTEM..."

BENEATH GOTHAM CITY.

...GOTHAM IS FED BY THREE RESERVOIRS HE COULD COMPROMISE BY MEANS OF AT LEAST THREE OLD PIPELINES VIABLE TO EACH.

SO WE'RE TALKING...NINE TO EIGHTEEN WAYS OF INFECTING THE WATERWAYS.

I NEED TO KNOW WHICH ONE HE'S GOING TO USE, JAMES. I NEED YOU TO SEE IT.

I'M SORRY, BATMAN, I JUST...I USED TO BE GOOD AT THIS BUT--



WHICH ONE?!



WHICH ##%~@!S ONE?!

WUMP



BATMAN! STOP! STOP IT! IF YOU WRECK THESE PIPES IT'LL ONLY BE HARDER!

I'LL TRY, OKAY?! I PROMISE...



I'LL TRY.

I'M... I'M SORRY, JAMES.

I WASN'T READY FOR HIM TO COME BACK... NOT THIS SOON. LAST LAUGH WASN'T FINISHED. THE DARK METAL IN THE CITY...

...WAYNE ENTERPRISES HAS BEEN GUTTING IT EVER SINCE MY LAST FIGHT WITH HIM. THERE'S OVER A TON BENEATH MY CAVE. BUT NOTHING IS COMPLETE.

TELL ME THIS. HE GOT YOU, DIDN'T HE?



WHAT ARE YOU--

HE INFECTED YOU WITH WHATEVER IS IN HIM.

I WON'T LET IT TAKE ME OVER. I HAVE ENOUGH ANTI-TOXIN TO HOLD IT OFF FOR AT LEAST ANOTHER WEEK. I...HOW DID YOU--

I MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO THINK LIKE I USED TO, BUT YOUR VOICE... I KNOW THAT VOICE.

THE FLATNESS
DEEP INSIDE. I
REMEMBER TRYING TO
HIDE IT, *PRACTICING*.
SEEING IF I COULD
FOOL MY FATHER.

I USED TO READ
GREETING CARDS TO
MYSELF BECAUSE THEY WERE
FULL OF EMOTION. IN THIS
SING-SONG VOICE--"THANK
YOU FOR BEING THERE FOR
ME!" PRETENDING...
ACTING.

MY DAD'S
GOING TO
SHUT DOWN
THE PROGRAM.
ISN'T HE?

YES. HE FILED
THE PAPERWORK
LAST WEEK.

THAT'S OKAY. IT'S JUST
THAT... THE OLD VOICE, IT
REALLY IS GONE. ALMOST
LIKE YOUR LAST LAUGH
IDEA. LIKE I'VE BEEN CUT
OFF FROM THE OLD
SYSTEMS, CONNECTED
TO THIS STRANGE
NEW SET UP.

EVERYTHING
IS SO *DIFFERENT*.
THE WAY I LOOK AT
THE WORLD, LOOK
AT PEOPLE. I EVEN
LET MYSELF START
TO *IMAGINE*
WHAT I...

...I JUST
WOULD HAVE
LIKED TO SEE
WHERE IT
LED.

I'M GOING
TO LOSE TO
HIM, JAMES,
AREN'T I?

FOR THE
FIRST TIME IN MY
LIFE... BATMAN...
ISN'T WORKING.
HE'S NOT--

Alfred
incoming...

SIR! MASTER
BRUCE!

ALFRED?
WHAT IS IT?
WHAT'S
WRONG?!

I'M SO
SORRY,
SIR.

IT'S HIM...
JOKER...

...HE WAS
DRUGGED SO HEAVILY
HE SHOULDN'T HAVE
BEEN ABLE TO SEE,
TO TALK, TO *MOVE*...
AND YET...

AND YET
WHAT?

MOMENTS
AGO... HE
JUST...

WHAT?!

HE GOT
UP AND HE
KEPT
SAYING...



YOU'RE BREAKING
MY HEART. HEE
HEEEeee

"AND HE
ATTACKED ME
AND WRECKED
THINGS AND..."

"...AND RAN OFF
SHRIEKING...OR
LAUGHING...OR
WAILING...I...I'M
SO SORRY, SIR."



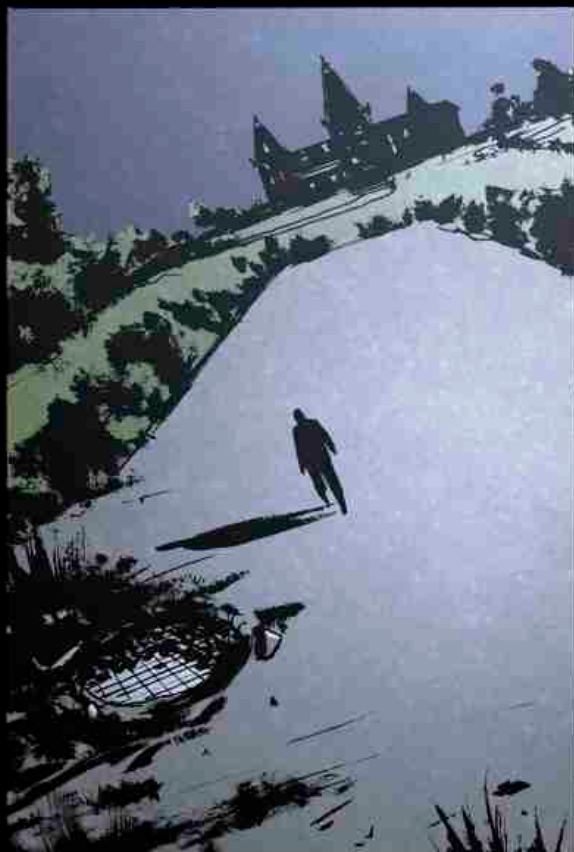
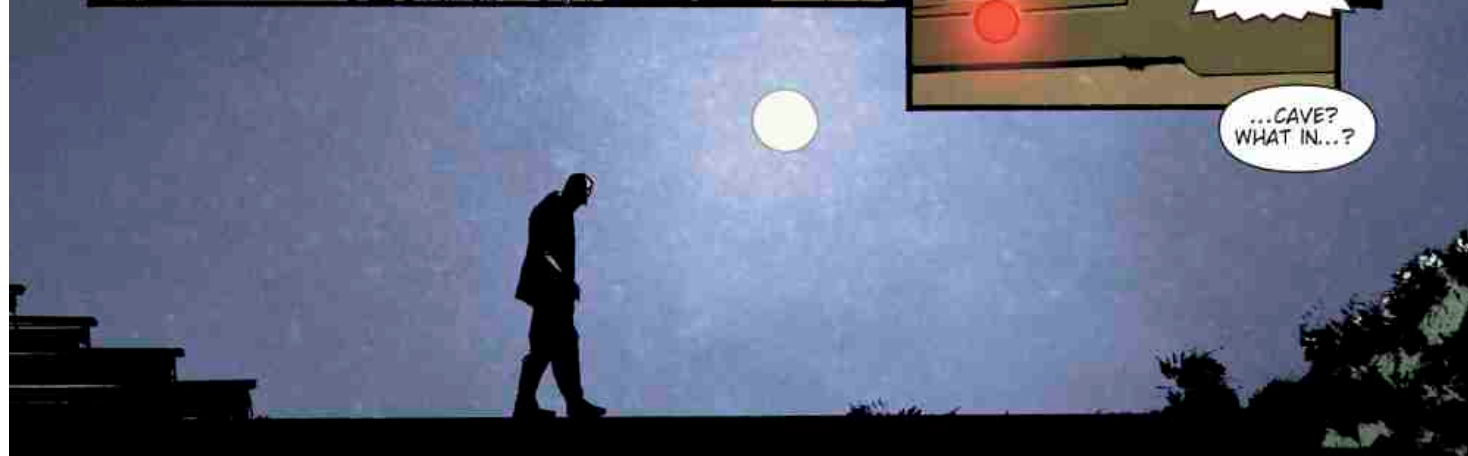
BATMAN, WHAT
HAPPENED? WHAT
IS IT?

WHAT
HAPPENED
IS...I SEE IT
NOW. YOU'RE
RIGHT.



I AM?
I--

YES,
YOU'RE RIGHT.
HE'S RIGHT.
YOU'RE ALL RIGHT,
EVERYONE...



MASTER
B--

CLANG

WHAT
ARE...

...ALL THE
ANTITOXINS
FOR JOKER
VENOM?
SMASHED...?

CLANG

WHAT DO YOU
NEED, ALFRED?

WHAT...
WHAT DO I
NEED?!

SIR...
BRUCE...
WHAT ARE YOU
DOING DOWN
THERE?!

WHY HAVE YOU LOCKED ME
OUT? I'M HERE TO HELP. I
CAN HELP. WE'LL FIGURE
OUT A PLAN TO--

heh.
SEE, THAT'S
THE THING,
ALFRED.

MAYBE OUR
PLAN...MAYBE
IT'S **WRONG**.

CLANG

MAYBE IT'S
ALL **ALWAYS**
BEEN
WRONG.

CLANG

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?!
BRUCE, YOU CAN'T BE--

I WAS RIGHT HERE WHEN I MADE IT...

...MY **BIG PLAN**. TO CLIMB OUT OF THE DARK, TO "BE BRAVE." WHAT DOES THAT MEAN, ALFRED? I DIDN'T SEAL THE CAVE, KILL THE BATS... I **CLIMBED OUT**, KEPT CLIMBING OVER AND OVER. Heh.

SOMEONE PLUNGES THE CITY INTO DARKNESS, I HELP IT CLIMB... CLIMB... CLIMB... **BE BRAVE!**

BRUCE, YOU DON'T SOUND--

BUT PEOPLE **DIE**. THEY GO TO THE POTTER'S FIELD... SO PRETTY. THEY GET TO PLAN WHAT? FOR HAPPINESS? NO. SAFETY? Heh.

WHAT AM I, ALFRED? A ROPE. BUT A BAT IS **MESSANGER** FROM THE UNDERWORLD. IT TELLS YOU WHAT TO DO, NOT WHAT TO **BECOME**. WHAT IF I MISSED THE MESSAGE, ALFRED? WHAT IF I MISSED IT **ALL**?

SIR... WHAT ARE YOU MAKING?! TELL ME WHAT YOU'RE MAKING!

CLANG

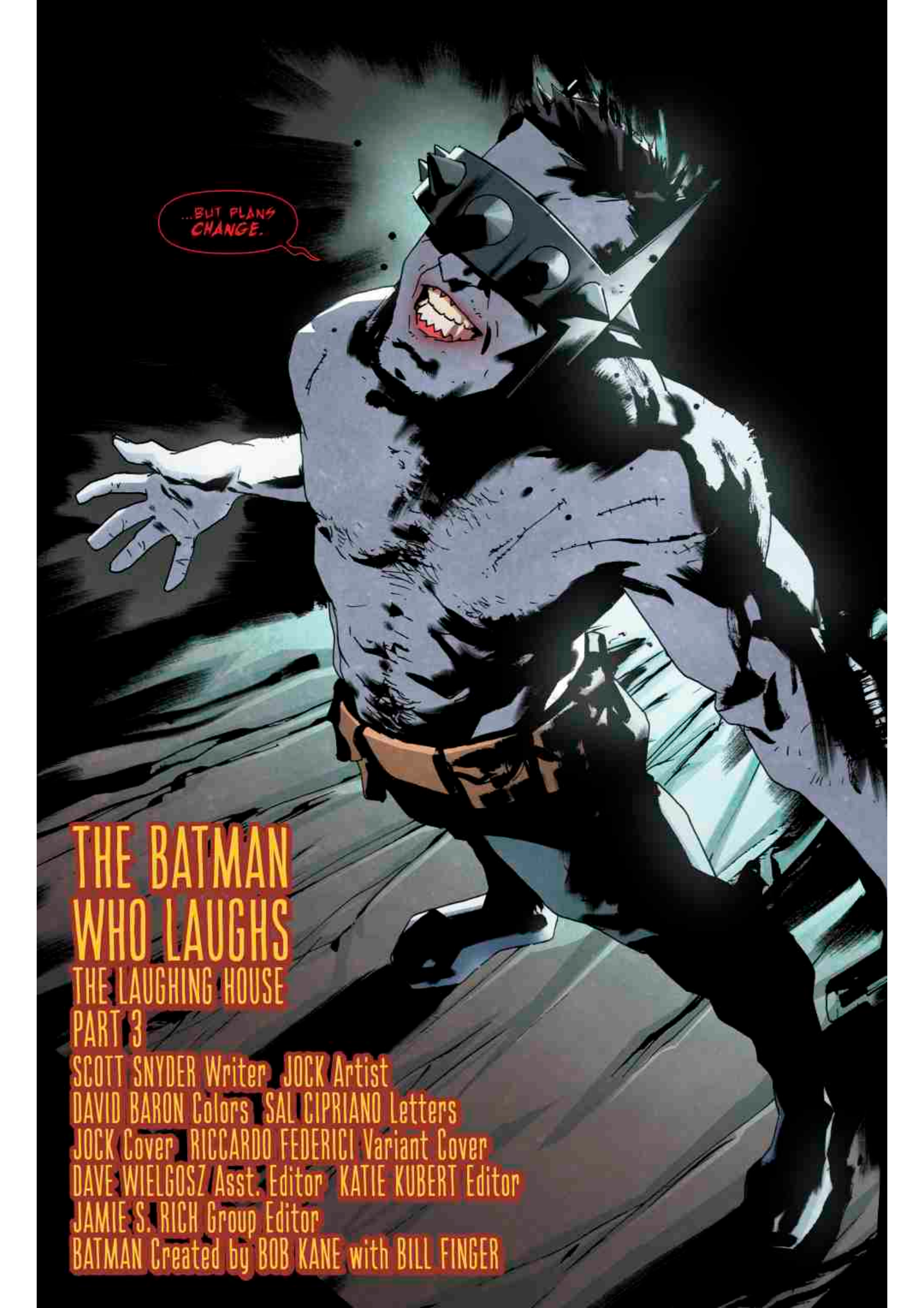
THERE. I'M DONE.

DON'T DO THIS, BRUCE... BATMAN WILL WORK!

NOT ANYMORE. NOT WITH HIM.

HE IS THE PLAN! NOW AND FOREVER! **HE IS THE PLAN!**

I'M SORRY, OLD FRIEND...



...BUT PLANS
CHANGE.

THE BATMAN WHO LAUGHS THE LAUGHING HOUSE PART 3

SCOTT SNYDER Writer JOCK Artist
DAVID BARON Colors SAL CIPRIANO Letters
JOCK Cover RICCARDO FEDERICI Variant Cover
DAVE WIELGOSZ Asst. Editor KATIE KUBERT Editor
JAMIE S. RICH Group Editor
BATMAN Created by BOB KANE with BILL FINGER



THE WORLD'S GREATEST DETECTIVE.
THE FASTEST MAN ALIVE.
THEY CAN SOLVE THE MYSTERY IF THEY
DON'T KILL EACH OTHER FIRST!

BATMAN *The* FLASH

THE PRICE

A 4-PART CROSSOVER

Written by

JOSHUA WILLIAMSON

Art by

**GUILLEM MARCH
RAFA SANDOVAL**

Part One **BATMAN #64**

Part Two **THE FLASH #64**

Part Three **BATMAN #65**

Part Four **THE FLASH #65**

**HEROES IN
CRISIS**

TIE-IN EVENT BEGINNING IN FEBRUARY!

WONDER COMICS

DIAL H FOR HERO

How did you get involved with the Wonder Comics project?

Editor Andy Khouri approached me over the summer.

He told me he had a cool new project in the works with Brian and Sam Humphries, and my eyes widened at both names. I love the both of them and had been wanting to work with Sam for some time now.

What are you most excited about?

Well, as I say, Sam is a friend and a talented writer, so I've been super excited about our collaboration.

It's great bouncing ideas off each other as we figure things out. We vibe really well together. Outside of that, I got very excited about this notion I had of having every H-Dial transformation serve as a loving homage to a different style of comics. I think it'll make for an interesting visual dynamic.



How do you find the balance in keeping these characters fresh while sticking to their legacies?

I think it's important to build off of what's been previously established—adding something new, while not necessarily quoting what's been done before. We've got some strong connections to the original DIAL H here and make it clear that it has a long legacy. But the Dial is about invention in the end, so we're doing our best to show something new each issue.

Were you previously a fan of these characters?

The original DIAL H was a bit before my time, so I only ever had a passing knowledge of it, but I really enjoy Robby Reed and how wildly varied his alter egos are.

Why should fans check it out?

Who hasn't daydreamed about having superpowers? This is for the daydreamers in all of us.

Describe this book in seven words (or fewer).

Anyone can be a hero. Dial H.

What does a first-time reader need to know before picking up this title?

There once was a time when phones could not fit in your pocket, were heavy as hell and had to be operated via rotary dial. Don't worry, Miguel hadn't seen one either.

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The Last Kryptonian-DCP

